

Questions in response to GovWorks Request for quote **RFQ 0406RQ60754**
Comprehensive Cotton Program Evaluation.

- 1) How many professional labor hours of effort were used to base the independent Government cost estimate for this project?

- **RESPONSE**

The government expects that the offeror will provide the number of hours that will best support their solution.

- 2) Does the comprehensive evaluation of the cotton crop insurance program include a complete program evaluation based on the Program Evaluation Handbook, FCIC 22010 for Cotton Crop Revenue Coverage, Cotton Revenue Assurance, Cotton Income Protection and Cotton Group Risk Protection in addition to the program evaluation of Multiple Peril Insurance Program American for Upland Cotton and Multiple Peril Insurance Program for Extra Long Staple Cotton? Are you expecting the contractor to follow the program evaluation handbook for each of the cotton programs?

- **RESPONSE**

As is stated in the SOW the evaluation will utilize the Program Evaluation Handbook as its frame work. Please see the below which is directly from the SOW:

Specific work requirements are provided below.

- 3.2.1 In the Program Evaluation Handbook, FCIC 22010 located on the RMA website at <http://www.rma.usda.gov/data/directives.html>, a general framework for the conduct of program evaluations is provided. This framework, and the analyses described therein, shall serve as the basis for the comprehensive evaluation of the cotton program.

The Contractor is required to hold a minimum of two listening sessions in each region of the cotton belt, for a total of eight (8) listening sessions. The specific requirements for the conduct of these listening sessions are provided in the Program Evaluation Handbook.

For other sections of the provided framework, it is the responsibility of the Contractor, in consultation with RMA, to determine which of the evaluation criteria are applicable to this evaluation of the cotton program. The contractor must submit, in writing, justification and must obtain RMA approval to exclude evaluation criteria. The Contractor may conduct

additional analyses beyond those listed in the Program Evaluation Handbook as deemed appropriate and relevant to the program evaluation.

- 3.2.2 In addition to the program evaluation requirements listed in 3.2.1, the Contractor shall conduct additional analyses of the cotton program and production systems, as discussed below. These additional analyses compliment the analyses conducted under 3.2.1 and shall be used by the Contractor in the development of and consideration of recommendations arising from this program evaluation. In particular, these additional analyses are designed to help the Contractor in the performance of this evaluation, make a more informed assessment regarding the true agronomic risk of growing the crop and the extent to which current rates reflect this underlying risk. These materials shall be incorporated into the evaluation report delivered by the Contractor.
- 3.2.2.(i) The Contractor shall provide a comprehensive discussion of the growth process of the cotton plant, the extent to which yield and quality are affected by adverse environmental events, the degree to which managerial inputs and production practices affect yield and quality, and the impact of resource heterogeneity (e.g., soil types) on production expectations. The Contractor must give consideration to engaging agronomists and/or crop physiologists for this component of the program evaluation.
- 3.2.2.(ii) The Contractor shall provide an evaluation of cotton yield variability relative to other principal crops grown in the production region, as well as to companion crops grown outside of the U.S. cotton belt. For example, cotton yield variability in the Mid-South region could be compared to corn and soybean yield variability in this region, as well as to corn and soybean yield variability in the corn belt. Potential data sources for these analyses would be the RMA yield history files, National Agricultural Statistics Service data, and possibly university yield trial data.

These comparisons are expected to provide some quantitative evidence of the inherent risks of cotton production vis-à-vis competing crops across the cotton belt, as well as across geographic regions. Further, the comparison of corn and soybean production in the corn and cotton belts may help provide insights into the differences in risk attributable to climate, soils, etc.

3) The Period of Performance states: The resulting award will have a Base Period beginning at the time of award and ending 12 months after award. The award will also include Four (4) option periods, which may be unilaterally exercised by the Government. Does the Government anticipate the period of performance of the project to be five years?

- **RESPONSE**

The government anticipates that it may take 12 months, however, offeror's are encouraged to propose timeframes less than agency expectations. Please see the following clause from the SOW:

Section 4.0 Schedule of Work

- 4.1 Period of Performance: The offeror must propose a period of performance that complies with the estimated delivery schedule, as well as RMA review. The agency anticipates a period of performance of one (1) year from date of award; however, offeror's are encouraged to propose timeframes less than agency expectations.
- 4.2 Delivery Schedule: The offeror shall determine and then submit a Delivery Schedule to RMA within 7 days of the date of award. The Contractor shall take into consideration the 45 day Government review period (see SOW Section 7.2) so that the schedule accommodates the review period while minimizing disruption to the remaining delivery due dates.

Early submission of a deliverable and/or early RMA acceptance of a deliverable is permitted without affecting the due dates for the subsequent deliverables.

Suggested Delivery Schedule Format to be included in the Offeror's Proposal

Deliverable	Timeframe
Oral Presentation	Award plus "X" days
Draft Program Evaluation Report Presentation	"Within X weeks from Oral Presentation
Final Program Evaluation Report	"X" days from acceptance of Draft Program Evaluation Report

4) Are proposals based on Time and Materials as opposed to Firm Fixed price acceptable? The Statement of Work outlines Research and Development (R&D) services (ex. compiling and analyzing results of research, data collection and review and data analysis, include recommendation for modifications of cotton program), which according to FAR 35.006 precludes using fixed-price contracting for R&D. Below is the language from FAR 35.006 -

- **RESPONSE**

The government is anticipating a firm fixed price contract. Not a time and material contract. The government does not view this work as Research and Development as indicated below.

35.006 -- Contracting Methods and Contract Type.

(a) In R&D acquisitions, the precise specifications necessary for sealed bidding are generally not available, thus making negotiation necessary. However, the use of negotiation in R&D contracting does not change the obligation to comply with Part 6.

(b) Selecting the appropriate contract type is the responsibility of the contracting officer. However, because of the importance of technical considerations in R&D, the choice of contract type should be made after obtaining the recommendations of technical personnel. Although the Government ordinarily prefers fixed-price arrangements in contracting, this preference applies in R&D contracting only to the extent that goals, objectives, specifications, and cost estimates are sufficient to permit such a preference. The precision with which the goals, performance objectives, and specifications for the work can be defined will largely determine the type of contract employed. The contract type must be selected to fit the work required.

(c) Because the absence of precise specifications and difficulties in estimating costs with accuracy (resulting in a lack of confidence in cost estimates) normally precludes using fixed-price contracting for R&D, the use of cost-reimbursement contracts is usually appropriate (see [Subpart 16.3](#)). The nature of development work often requires a cost-reimbursement completion arrangement (see [16.306\(d\)](#)). When the use of cost and performance incentives is desirable and practicable, fixed-price incentive and cost-plus-incentive-fee contracts should be considered in that order of preference.

(d) When levels of effort *can* be specified in advance, a short-duration fixed-price contract may be useful for developing system design concepts, resolving potential problems, and reducing Government risks. Fixed-price contracting may also be used in minor projects when the objectives of the research are well defined and there is sufficient confidence in the cost estimate for price negotiations. (See [16.207](#).)

(e) Projects having production requirements as a follow-on to R&D efforts normally should progress from cost-reimbursement contracts to fixed-price contracts as designs become more firmly established, risks are reduced, and production tooling, equipment,

and processes are developed and proven. When possible, a final commitment to undertake specific product development and testing should be avoided until --

- (1) Preliminary exploration and studies have indicated a high degree of probability that development is feasible and
- (2) The Government has determined both its minimum requirements and desired objectives for product performance and schedule completion.